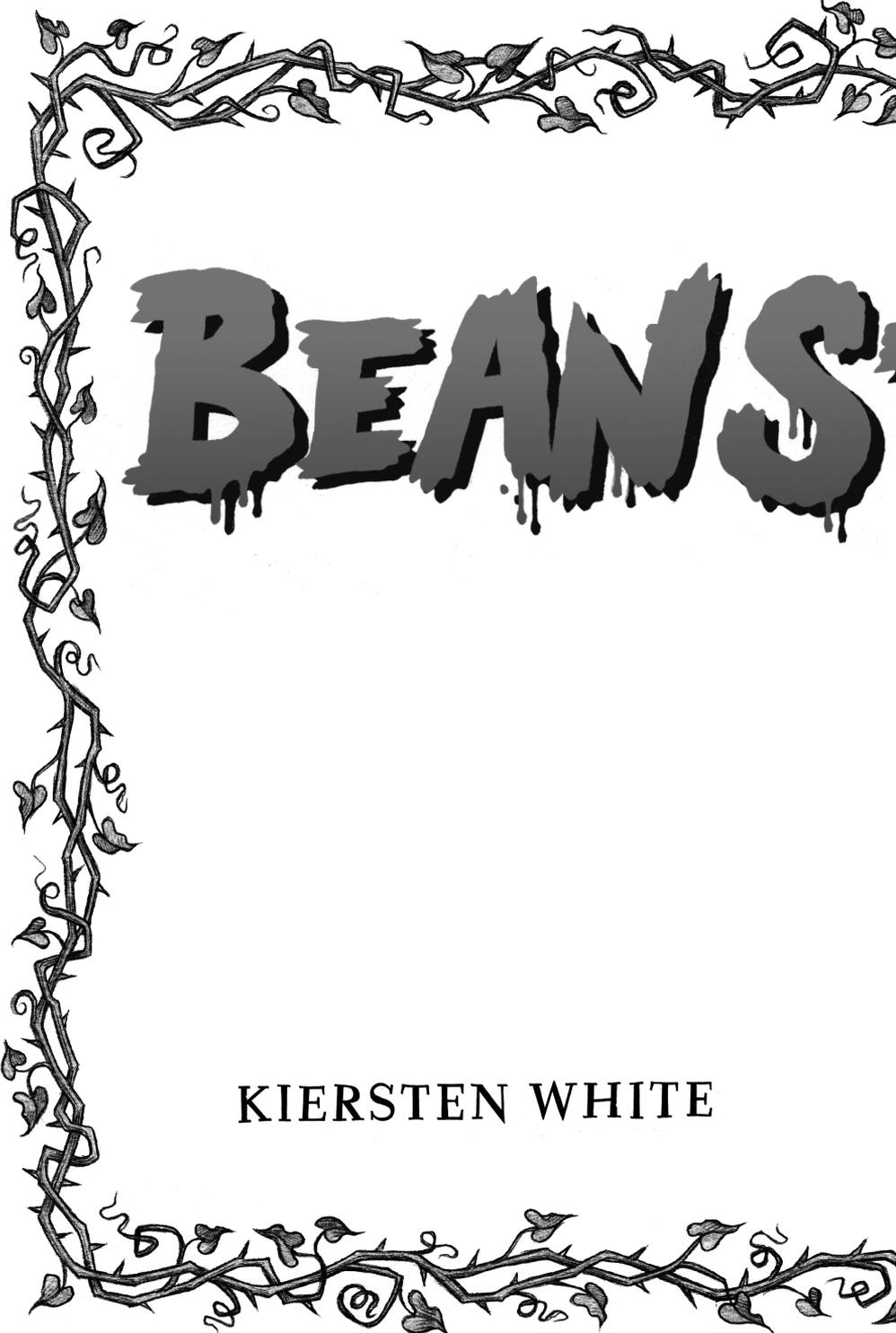
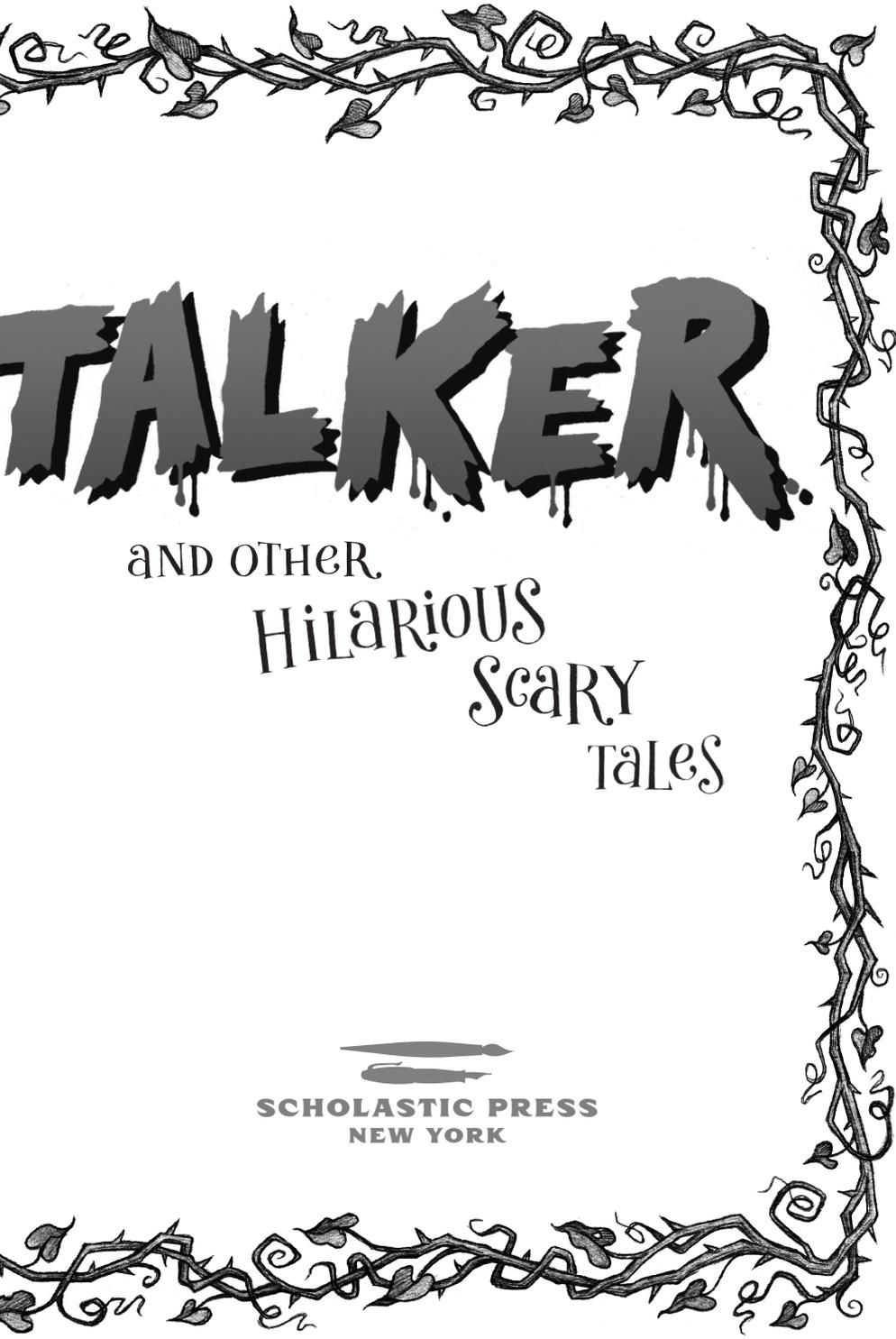


**BEAN  
STALKER**  
AND OTHER  
HILARIOUS SCARYTALES



# BEANS

KIERSTEN WHITE



# TALKER

AND OTHER

HILARIOUS

SCARY

TALES



SCHOLASTIC PRESS  
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## For Elena, Jonah, and Ezra My little Fridays in human form

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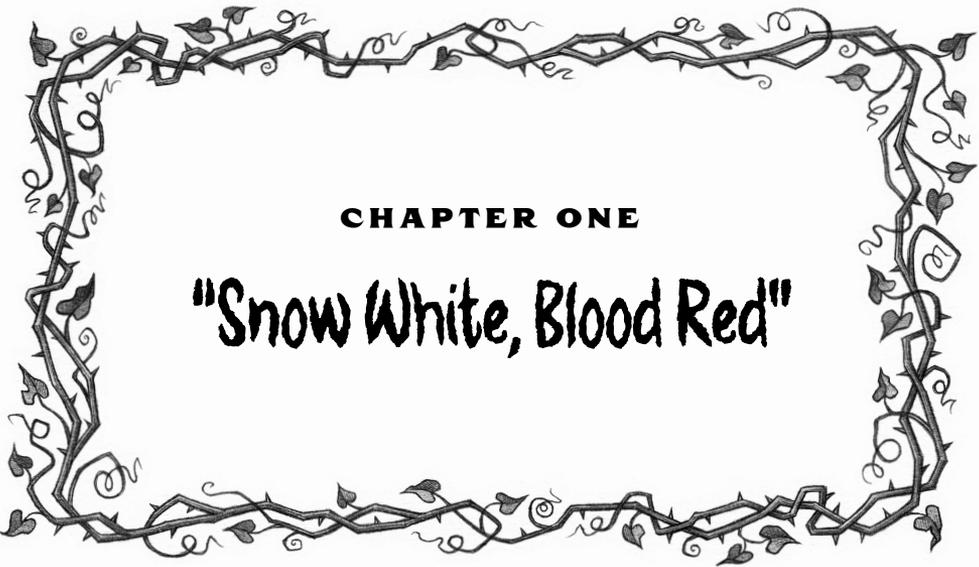
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## CHAPTER ONE

# "Snow White, Blood Red"

Once upon a time in the next kingdom, several years before the prince learned the difference between fair hair and fair Herr, there lived a queen. There also lived a king, otherwise it would have been a queendom. But he isn't important yet.

This queen wanted, more than anything, to have a baby. (Obviously she had not spent much time around babies. Anyone who has could tell you they're pretty awful. They smell bad, they throw up a lot, and they cry instead of sleeping. But maybe she didn't know this, or maybe she knew and just didn't care.)

Every evening, she sat at her window and watched the bats fly across the pale twilight sky. Which was a

weird hobby, but, being queen, she could do whatever she wanted.

This particular evening, a bat flapped to a frantic halt on her windowsill. Its tiny, furry ribs shuddered with breath. Although it was basically a fuzzy black rat with wings, the queen thought it was adorable. Cooing, she reached out to pet it.

It bit down with surprisingly sharp fangs on her finger.

“Ouch!” the queen shouted, scaring the bat away. She shook her hand, and two drops of ruby blood fell to the snowy-white lace of her skirt. “Oh, how beautiful,” she crooned with a dreamy sigh. This might be why the king isn’t in the story yet. The queen is pretty creepy. He probably spent most of his time hunting or riding or hiding in another part of the castle to avoid her.

“If only I could have a baby with skin as white as snow, hair as black as a bat, and lips as red as blood.”

Clasping her hands to her heart, she closed her eyes and wished with all her might that her dream would come true. And, deep within her, something fluttered like the tiny pulse of velvet bat wings.



## “SNOW WHITE, BLOOD RED”

All through the pregnancy, the queen had gotten thinner, paler, and sicker. She was too weak to leave her room. She only had enough energy to sew. One day, a servant caught her licking the blood away after she accidentally pricked her finger.

“For the baby,” she said with a dreamy sigh.

This is getting scary. Let’s skip ahead.

The baby was born, covered in blood. Babies are gross. You *were* warned.

She had pale, cold skin, fuzzy black hair, and perfect crimson lips. And instead of a gummy baby mouth, she had several tiny pearls of teeth. *Sharp* teeth.

“Snow White,” the queen named her. The midwife didn’t mind all the blood, because of Snow White’s hypnotic eyes. The servants didn’t mind cutting red meat into tiny, baby-size pieces, because she was so beautiful. The queen didn’t even mind that Snow White bit her with those sharp, pearly teeth when she wanted to eat. The queen was deliriously happy.

The king was happy, too, that his wife finally had what she wanted and would maybe be less creepy now.

And then the queen died.

That was not happy.

But no one was sad for very long. Snow White was too beautiful for anyone to stay sad. At first, her stained lips and her pure black eyes were uncomfortable to look at. But the longer anyone looked into those bottomless eyes, the more they realized how much they *loved* Snow White. The poor baby!

Snow White was beautiful.

Snow White was good.

Snow White was sweet.

They would do anything Snow White asked.

And they would feed her whatever she wanted.

Yes. Look into those pure black eyes. We love Snow White.

*We love Snow White.*



The king's new wife stepped out of her carriage. She was late. It didn't seem to matter. It was dusk, which was when everyone in the castle started coming out and getting their work done. Everyone slept all day and stayed up all night, because that was what the king wanted, because that was what Snow White wanted.

The king's new wife watched as they scurried

## “SNOW WHITE, BLOOD RED”

about—pale, weak, with dark circles under their eyes and vacant expressions.

“Oh dear,” she said.

The king had sent her a letter with shaky handwriting. He said that Snow White needed a mother, that Snow White was a dear little thing desperately in need of new company, that Snow White would change the king’s new wife’s life forever. The king’s new wife had thought it odd that he never said anything about how much he wanted her as a wife, or what a good queen she would make. The letter had been entirely about Snow White.

Still. She never turned down a stepchild.

“Isn’t it weird how no one here has a tan?” her stepson, Jack, asked, but she shook her head and drew herself up to her tallest, most queenly height.

“Come along, Jack,” she said as she swept through the courtyard and into the castle.

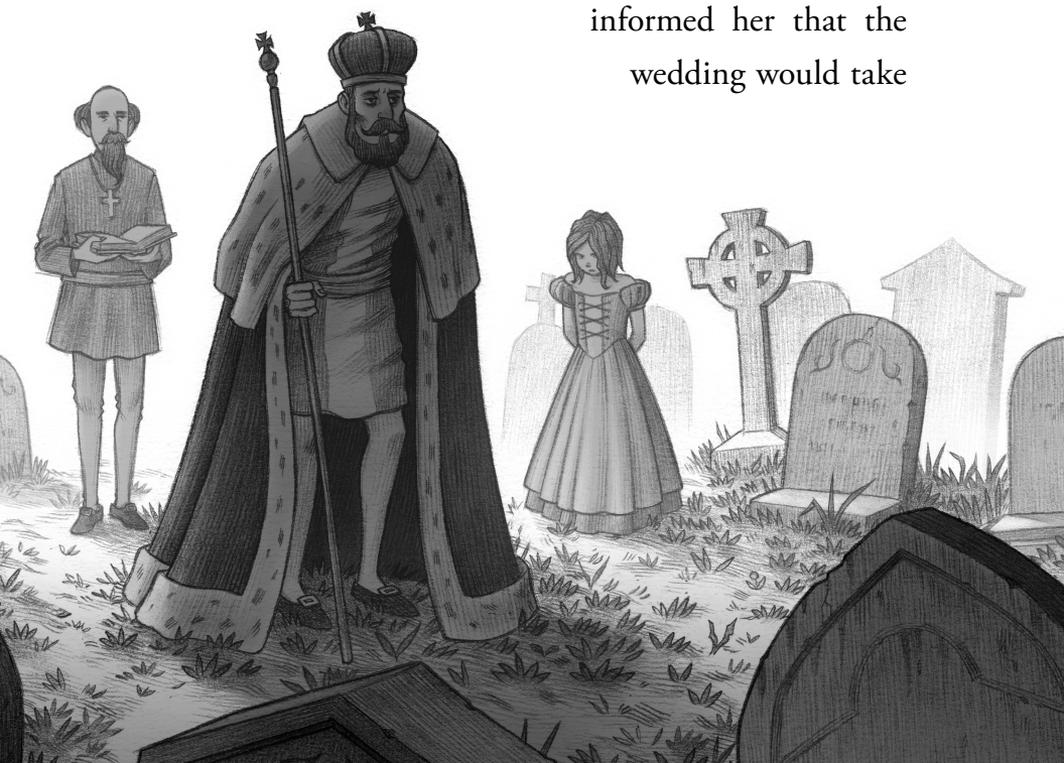
The wedding was scheduled for midnight. The king’s new wife put on her finest gown, changed her black hair from a no-nonsense bun into cascading curls, and fastened a heavy gold necklace around her throat. She didn’t look at all witchlike, despite what certain princes would think upon seeing her at a tower.

“Looking good, Mom!” Jack said.

“Hmm,” the king’s new wife said, gazing critically at herself in the mirror. Her skin was as fair as new milk. This *fair* is a nice way of saying that she was incredibly pale, prone to horrible sunburns, and didn’t look good in very many colors. She was, in fact, as fair as a person could be while still being a person.

That will be important later on.

She made her way regally to the castle chapel. This was her first marriage to a king, and she was excited in spite of herself. But when she got to the chapel, no one was there. A servant meekly informed her that the wedding would take



## “SNOW WHITE, BLOOD RED”

place in the castle cemetery. By Snow White’s request, of course.

The king waited for her there. He was thin and stooped, and his clothes hung on him like a very wealthy scarecrow. He, too, had dark circles under his eyes and a vacant expression on his terribly pale face. But the king’s new wife was fairer still.

At his side was a small girl of seven or eight. When she saw the king’s new wife, her black eyes lit up with anticipation. Her gaze lingered on the gold at the king’s new wife’s neck. Snow White licked her beautiful red lips and smiled with her sharp teeth.

